DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 243 148 CS 208 290

AUTHOR Adler, Keith
TITLE Online Secondary Research in the Advertising Research Class: A Friendly Introduction to Computing.
PUB DATE Aug 84
NOTE 9p.; Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the Association for Education in Journalism and Mass Communication (67th, Gainesville, FL, August 5-8, 1984).
PUB TYPE Guides - Classroom Use - Guides (For Teachers) (052) -- Speeches/Conference Papers (150)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *Advertising; Assignments; Computer Assisted Instruction; *Computer Literacy; Course Descriptions; Higher Education; *Information Retrieval; *Online Systems; *Reference Services; Research Design; *Research Skills; Search Strategies; Student Research
IDENTIFIERS *Research Papers (Students)

ABSTRACT

In an effort to promote computer literacy among advertising students, an assignment was devised that required the use of online database search techniques to find secondary research materials. The search program, chosen for economical reasons, was "Classroom Instruction Program" offered by Dialog Information Services. Available for a charge of $14 per hour, the program provides students with access to over 100 different databases. For the assignment, students were asked to prepare search objectives for any advertising-related topic of their choice. Once the students completed their search objectives and a command outline, they were given a very basic search to be typed into the terminal. This basic search provided a vehicle through which students could evaluate their understanding of the search program before searching. After completing the rote assignment, students made their own bibliographic search. To reduce the telephone connect time, several constraints were included, among them the following: (1) students were assigned to work in teams of 3 to 5 individuals; (2) the number of bibliographic references typed was minimized; and (3) search setups were graded and corrected before signing on the computer. Instructor preparation was provided by the database vendors and Dialog. Especially useful were their training seminar manuals. Initial evaluations of the assignment showed the only deficiency to be too few searches. (HOD)

****
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
****

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

X This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.

☐ Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.

• Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official NIE position or policy.

ED243148

ONLINE SECONDARY RESEARCH IN THE ADVERTISING RESEARCH CLASS: A FRIENDLY INTRODUCTION TO COMPUTING

Keith Adler
Associate Professor

Michigan State University
East Lansing, Michigan 48824
(517) 353-3266

"PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY

Keith Adler

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)."

CS208290

ONLINE SECONDARY RESEARCH IN THE ADVERTISING RESEARCH CLASS: A FRIENDLY INTRODUCTION TO COMPUTING

(Abstract)

In the shadows of the computer revolution, many advertising programs have established new math and computer science requirements. Despite these efforts to legislate new attitudes toward computers, students still exhibit fear and anxiety when asked to use a computer in class. This paper reports on the use of online database searching as an exercise in the advertising research class. After one year of use, the online assignment continues to be one of the favorite assignments for students. Implementation suggestions have been included.

The computer and information revolution has been accompanied by several new linguistic phrases which have been ill-defined, but heartily debated. These phrases have included, "computer literacy," "computing literacy," "computer anxiety," and an aberrant form of dialogue called "computerese." If these phrases were unfamiliar, certainly the popular descriptions of the computer age as the "Micro Millennium" by Christopher Evans (4) and the subsuming character of a "Network Nation" by Hiltz and Turroff (8) were enticing enough to start advertising faculties deliberating. But, despite faculty consideration of computer alternatives, advertising students have exhibited fear of using the computer,especially in research classes.

In order to promote computing literacy among advertising students an effort was made to find an assignment which would require minimal computer skills, yet which would be "perceived" as a computer assignment by students. An important requisite for this assignment was relevance to academics for the student. The assignment chosen was the use of online database search techniques to find secondary research materials. Since the database chosen also allowed various advertising

and business topics to be examined, the extension to other academic areas was guaranteed. Since the introduction of the secondary research assignment, others have used online techniques in advertising education, including the use of online techniques in a media course by Gusse and Lancaster (7).

The Instructional Logistics of Online Searching

There were several alternatives to be considered for online database searching. Advertising Marketing Intelligence (AMI) by J. Walter Thompson and the New York Times offers student rates for their database. (3) For reasons of student numbers, this database was elmininated from consideration. Nearly 300 students a year were predicted to use the service. Commercial vendors, like Compuserv and The Source (5) were considered, but deemed too expensive. The most economical service was provided by the "Classroom Instruction Program" offered by Dialog Information Services. For a charge of $15 per hour, students could use over 100 different databases.

Dialog included such popular databases as ERIC, PSYCHINFO, the online equivalent to Psychological Abstracts, and ABI/INFORM, a biliographic database with business periodical information in it. Of particular interest was a database called ADTRACK, which is a database which includes abstracts for consumer advertisements from consumer magazines. (2) The assignments were designed for use primarily on ABI/INFORM and ADTRACK.

Several constraints were included in the use of online services to reduce the telephone connect time. They were as follows: 1) students were assigned to work in teams of 3 to 5 individuals; 2) the number of bibliographic references typed were minimized, since individual references were charged at $.20 to $.25 each; 3) search setups were graded and corrected before signing on the computer, to reduce the connect time.

The Secondary Research Assignments

For students, one primary advantage of the Dialog system was the minimal number of commands necessary to complete a search. With only four commands, "Begin," "Explain," "Select Sets," and "Type," students were expected to master the system quickly. Over the period of one year, or four different sections of the research course, the structure of the assignment was varied. During the initial stages, the assignments allowed little freedom for the student to experiment. Later, more alternatives were allowed. The assignment was usually structured as follows: a) students were asked to find information about advertising topics, like cable television advertising, in ABI/INFORM; b) students were asked to use ADTRACK to find how many times a specific sopkesperson was used; c) a second ADTRACK search was used to examine competitive strategy, such as, "Find out how many personal computer manufacturers are using business weeklies in their print advertising strategies."

In recent months, the first part of the database search assignment was altered so students had more freedom to explore areas of their own interest. They were asked to prepare search objectives for any advertising-related topic which they wanted to search. Once the search objectives and command outline was completed correctly, the students were allowed to perform their search. Another alteration in the assignment was to provide a very basic search which could be typed into the terminal by the student. This was added as the initial assignment for students. Since students commonly made typing errors, the prepared search provided a vehicle through which a student could evaluate his or her understanding before searching. One the rote assignment was completed, students went on to their own bibliographic search, and to the ADTRACK searches.

Instructor Preparation

Instructor preparation for the database search assignment was facilitated by the "Classroom Instruction Program" package, and the assistance of personnel from Corporate Intelligence, Inc., owners of ADTRACK. The Classroom Instruction Program from Dialog included a free System Seminar for the instructor. Corporate Intelligence provided free ADTRACK manuals and training aids for the instructor, in addition to assistance during the initial implementation stage of the project. For instructors with little computer experience, a necessary addition to classroom materials would be the Dialog "Guide to Searching" (6),

which provides information about communication between individual terminals and the Dialog system via Telenet, Tymenet, and Uninet.

In the classroom, the instructor had to provide information about various database concepts, including the use of the Boolean operators AND and OR, for the selection of sets. For ADTRACK, students had to be informed about the use of prefix search commands, in order to examine various spokespersons or corporations in the advertisements. The ADTRACK "Training Seminar" manual (1), and the "System Seminar" manual from Dialog (9) provided more than adequate support. Both manuals have well prepared examples for the novice instructor.

Cost and Student Reaction

For sections of the Advertising Resarch class with enrollments of 60 students, the average per term cost has been $250. This cost has been covered by contributions from clients whose product or service has been to object of research for subsequent campaigns classes. Some institutions would probably find a minimal laboratory fee necessary for the search assignment.

Student reaction to the database assignment has been more positive than expected. Initially, attempts were made to have students fill out evaluations of the assignments; but, these essentially showed the only deficiency to be too few searches. All students thought the assignment very relevant to their career in advertising; but more importantly, they thought it relevant to academic success in their senior level classes. From reactions to the assignment, it was possible to see

confidence in student use of the computer grow considerably. Feedback about the success of the assignment was offered by university librarians who found students from the Advertising Research class very knowledgeable about search concepts and techniques.

Other advertising educators will undoubtedly find the techniques well received by students. With the large number of databases available, there are no doubt countless variations and possibilities for this assignment.

REFERENCES

1. ADTRACK Training Seminar, (St. Paul, Minnesota: Corporate Intelligence Inc., 1982).

2. ADTRACK User's Manual, (St. Paul, Minnesota: Corporate Intelligence Inc., 1981).

3. Cuadra, Ruth N., David M. Abels, and Judith Wanger, Directory of Online Databases, 3 (Spring, 1982), 18.

4. Evans, Christopher, The Network Nation, (New York: Washington Square Press, 1979).

5. Glossbrenner, Alfred, The Complete Handbook of Personal Computer Communications, (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1983).

6. Guide to Dialog Searching, (Palo Alto, California: Lockheed Information and Retrieval Service, 1981).

7. Gusse, David R. and Kent Lancaster, "Using On-line Data Services Makes Course More Realistic," Journalism Educator, 3 (Autumn 1983), 6-10.

8. Hiltz, Starr Roxanne and Murray Turoff, The Network Nation, (Reading, Massachusetts: Addison-Wesley, 1978).

9. System Seminar, (Palo Alto, California: Lockheed Dialog Information and Retrieval Service, 1982).